

Washington, D.C. - In a bipartisan joint letter to the Surface Transportation Board, several members of Illinois' Congressional delegation joined Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08) in opposing Canadian National Railroad's (CN) purchase of the EJ&E line.

"This letter is a clear signal to CN and to federal regulators that a consensus is building among lawmakers that this proposal has detrimental ramifications for the region," Bean said. "I appreciate my colleagues joining me as we work to protect the families in Illinois."

"We are concerned with the adverse impacts the proposed increase in freight traffic will have on many communities along the EJ&E," the letter says. "Many communities unaccustomed to and ill-equipped to handle increased freight traffic are facing a four-fold increase. This increase will cause significant delays on already congested arterial roads in the collar counties. Additionally, first responders will be unable to respond quickly to emergencies in communities that will now be divided by trains nearly two miles in length."

Joining Bean on the letter were Representatives Donald Manzullo (16th), Peter Roskam (6th), Judy Biggert (13th), Tim Johnson (15th), Jerry Costello (12th), and Bill Foster (14th). It was addressed to the Surface Transportation Board (STB), an independent federal agency which will ultimately approve or disapprove of the sale.

This letter follows a similar joint message from Bean and Senator Dick Durbin and incorporates past objections that Bean has raised, as well as a response to recent communication from CN's CEO, Hunter Harrison.

CN announced its plans to purchase the EJ&E rail line in October 2007. CN has estimated freight traffic will increase on this line from 5 freight trains per day to about 20 per day through numerous suburban municipalities.

The increased freight traffic could have broad impacts on the region's transportation, including significant delays to already congested arterial roads. Some commuters to northern Lake County towns like Antioch and Lake Villa could face huge backups along Illinois Route 59. Driving from Crystal Lake, Woodstock and McHenry into northern Cook County along U.S.

Route 14 could also become much more difficult, effectively cutting McHenry County off from easy access to Chicago.

At Congresswoman Bean's request, the STB has initiated an environmental review of the transaction. During the initial phase to determine scope of the impact, the STB saw an unprecedented turnout at its public meetings, with one meeting alone drawing over 1,500 people. Currently, the STB is summarizing comments from those public meetings.

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